

# Change of Status to F-1 Student

Ph: 512-245-7966, Email: [international@txstate.edu](mailto:international@txstate.edu)

[www.international.txstate.edu](http://www.international.txstate.edu)

Students intending to study, or already studying at Texas State in a nonimmigrant visa classification other than F-1, may have the option to apply to US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for a change of status to F-1. To apply for a change of status to F-1, you will need a Form I-20 (certificate of eligibility) from International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS). This process only changes your status, i.e., the classification indicated on your I-94 record and not the visa stamp in your passport.

To receive the F-1 visa stamp in your passport, you can either:

- 1) apply for a change of status in the US using the Form I-539, then once approved, travel outside of the US and apply for an F-1 visa at a US consulate in your home country, and return to the US as an F-1 student.
- 2) Alternatively, instead of applying for a change of status in the US, you may obtain a Form I-20 from ISSS and return to your home country to apply for an F-1 visa at a US consulate to reenter the US as an F-1 student.

**ISSS strongly recommends traveling outside of the US with a new Form I-20 and applying for an F-1 visa in your home country. The in-country change of status application is timely and unpredictable.**

**The following nonimmigrants are not permitted to change status to F-1 in the US:**

- WT and WB visitors admitted under the Visa Waiver Program, M-1 students, C, D, K, and S nonimmigrants
- J-1 physicians admitted to receive graduate medical education or training
- J nonimmigrants subject to the 212(e) 2-year foreign residence requirement.
  - (If you are subject to the two-year home country residency requirement 212 (e), you must first obtain a waiver, which could take up to 9 months.)

## Points to consider before applying for a Change of Status:

• USCIS processing times may vary. Please see: <a href="https://egov.uscis.gov/processing-times/">https://egov.uscis.gov/processing-times/</a>
• If you currently qualify for in-state tuition based on your residency status, changing your status to F-1 may disqualify you from receiving in-state tuition and you will be required to pay out-of-state tuition since F-1 may not domicile in the US. Contact the Residency Specialist at Texas State to learn more: <a href="https://www.admissions.txstate.edu/pay-for-college/residency.html">https://www.admissions.txstate.edu/pay-for-college/residency.html</a>
• You may attend school while your application is pending <b>unless</b> you are in F-2 Dependent or B-2 Visitor status. F-2 Dependents and B-2 Visitors <b>may not</b> take classes until your change to F-1 status is approved.
• If you are in a status that does not permit employment, you <b>cannot</b> work on campus nor apply for practical training until the change to F-1 status is approved.
• USCIS officers must determine eligibility for a change of status. A prospective student could be generally eligible for issuance of an I-20, but if he or she is not eligible for a change of status, a change of status application will not be approved.
• A nonimmigrant that travels abroad while an application for change of status is pending is considered to have abandoned the change of status application. USCIS will deny the application if they become aware of the departure.
• Nonimmigrants who have filed a timely application for change of status to a different nonimmigrant status can remain in the US while their application is being adjudicated by USCIS providing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(a) you are in a valid legal nonimmigrant status at the time you file your application and USCIS receives it; and</li><li>(b) <b>your current status continues to be valid up until the date your requested F-1 status begins.</b></li></ul>
• If you are a child in a dependent visa classification (i.e. H-4, L-2, R-2, etc.), <b>your requested start date of your F-1 status must begin before you turn 21 years of age.</b> A-1 and A-2 dependents must change their status before age 25.

**Review the steps below and discuss any questions you have with a DSO by scheduling an appointment.**

### **Step 1 – Obtain a Form I-20 (you must first be admitted and submit financial documents)**

Before ISSS can create you an I-20 you must first be admitted to Texas State University for a program of study. To request an I-20, **review Changing Visa Status to F-1:** [www.international.txstate.edu/prospective/changestatus.html](http://www.international.txstate.edu/prospective/changestatus.html). You must indicate which semester you would like your F-1 status to begin (choose a semester which begins at least 3-5 months into the future). Additionally, you must submit financial documents that show ability to support the **cost of attendance for one academic year:** [www.international.txstate.edu/prospective/tuition.html](http://www.international.txstate.edu/prospective/tuition.html).

Schedule an appointment with a DSO online ([www.international.txstate.edu/schedule-appointment.html](http://www.international.txstate.edu/schedule-appointment.html)) or call ISSS at 512-245-7966. Prior to the appointment, review and complete **Legal Advice and ISSS Advising Statement of Understanding** (see page 3).

\*If your spouse and/or child dependent(s) are changing status with you, you must request an F-2 Dependent I-20 for each dependent and provide financial evidence for at least \$5,400 per spouse and/or \$3,600 per child dependent. **Review F-2 Dependents webpage:** <https://www.international.txstate.edu/current/F-2-Dependents.html>

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## Step 2 – Submit Form I-539 and all supporting documents to USCIS

**It is strongly recommended to include all of the following documents with your Form I-539:**

1. **Form I-539** Application to Extend Status/Change Nonimmigrant Status: <http://www.uscis.gov/i-539>
  - **Form I-539A** – required for every co-applicant included on Form I-539. Parents may sign for children under 14 years old
2. **Personal checks** or money orders payable to “*U.S. Department of Homeland Security*” for:
  - a. \$370.00, Form I-539 filing fee and
  - b. \$85.00, biometrics service fee for every applicant and co-applicant (dependents)
3. (optional) **A Letter of Request to USCIS** addressed to “Dear USCIS Officer”. Send a letter explaining why you want to change status to F-1. A strong letter can help convince USCIS of your temporary intent. Examples:
  - “I have been admitted as a full-time regular degree seeking student.”
  - “My spouse or parent will soon complete his/her program or his/her status will expire and leave the U.S...”
  - “I will soon turn 21 and my current visa status will expire...”
4. **A copy of your acceptance letter from Texas State University or an unofficial transcript**
  - If you do not have a copy of your acceptance letter, contact the Graduate College or Undergraduate Admissions for a copy; or an unofficial transcript can be printed from Catsweb.
5. **Financial Support Documents** – evidence that you have immediate funds available to pay for your tuition and living expenses for at least one full academic year. Financial documents must be current and in English or have a certified English translation. Such evidence includes but not limited to:
  - Scholarships and fellowships on official letterhead
  - Bank Statements
    - To avoid a request for evidence (RFE) from USCIS, ISSS strongly recommends submitting copies of at least three months of your and or your sponsor’s most current, detailed financial account statements for each account intended to use to fund your education.
  - Sponsor must complete the *Form I-134, Affidavit of Support*, see <http://www.uscis.gov/i-134>
6. **Copies of your immigration documents (and any dependents who will be included with you on the application)**
  - Passport page(s), visa stamp, I-94 (copy of card or electronic printout), all I-20s or I-797s related to your status
7. **A Copy of your Texas State Form I-20**
  - You will receive your I-20 approximately 3-5 business days after submitting the I-20 request to ISSS
8. **Receipt Showing Proof of Payment of SEVIS I-901 Fee**
  - After receiving your Form I-20, you must pay the SEVIS fee to obtain the receipt; you must pay the fee online: [www.fmjfee.com/i901fee](http://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee) and print the receipt at the end.
9. **If changing from a dependent classification (such as E-2, L-2, H-4, F-2...) you should include:**
  - Copies of primary visa holder’s immigration documents (passport page(s), visa stamp, I-94, any I-797s)
  - Marriage certificate for spouses in dependent statuses or birth certificate (if applicable)
  - Proof that primary visa holder is in valid legal status
    - If you are in F-2 status, then I-20s and a transcript of the F-1 or letter of good standing from university
    - If you are in H-4, L-2, TD status, then paystubs for the last 3 months of employment of the H-1B, L1, TN
    - If you are in E2 status, proof of business ownership of the primary visa holder

## Step 3 – Mailing Documents

Once you receive your new I-20, mail your change of status application with all required documents to the appropriate USCIS Service Center.

Find the direct filing address on the USCIS Form I-539 website: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-539-addresses>.

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## Legal Advice and ISSS Advising Statement of Understanding

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I understand that:

- International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) offers best practices information on immigration processes such as Change of Status, Reinstatement, F-2, J-1, J-2, H-1B, H-4, and other related statuses as a courtesy to international students and their dependents under a Texas State University issued Form I-20. **Please note that all information provided is not considered legal advice.**
- I may choose to hire a board-certified immigration attorney to assist me in my immigration process at any time.

In signing this **Statement of Understanding**, I hereby acknowledge that I have read and understand the entire document, and I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and receive answers to my satisfaction. **I shall not hold Texas State University liable for any loss or damage to my immigration status, including any costs involved, as a result of any information given to me.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (as per your passport)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date (mm/dd/yy)